CLAIMS

1. For use in polishing silicon wafers, an endless belt to act as a polishing tool, wherein said belt comprises a woven r non-woven fabric coated with a suitable polymer.

2. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said polymer is polyurethane, having a low Shore-D hardness.

3. A belt according to claim 2, wherein the Shore-D hardness of the polyurethane is in the range 65-75.

4. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said polymer is a thermoset or thermoplastic polymer having a high abrasion resistance.

5. A belt according to claim 4, wherein said polymer is selected from the group comprising:- polyamides, silicones, fluoropolymers, epoxy resins and thermoplastic polyurethanes.

6. A belt according to claim 2, wherein the coating comprises an upper layer and an intermediate layer, of materials having different hardness.

7. A belt according to claim 6, wherein the upper layer is of a harder material than the intermediate layer.

8. A belt according to claim 6, wherein the upper layer is of a softer material than the intermediate layer.

9. A belt according to claim 8, wherein the upper layer is of a foamed plastic material.

10. A belt according to claim 8, wherein the upper layer comprises a layer of beads of plastic, glass or soluble material.

11. A belt according to claim 10, wherein said beads comprise expanded

polystyrene pellets which are dispersed into the upper layer.

12. A belt according to claim 6, wherein abrasive particles or fibres are incorporated in the upper layer.

13. A belt according to claim 6, wherein the surface of the upper layer is provided with a micro-textured coating.

14. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said fabric is woven in endless form and embodies yarns of high tensile strength and low elongation.

15. A belt according to claim 6, wherein said high tensile strength yarns are selected from the group comprising:- meta or para-aramids; polyetherimide; polyimide; polyetherketone; PEEK; gel spun UHMW polyethylene; and polybenzimidazole.

16. A belt according to claim 6, wherein said high tensile strength yarns comprise a mixture or blend of two or more such yarns.

17. A belt according to claim 6, wherein said yarns are of any one of:- glass fibres, carbon or ceramic yarns, basalt fibres, other rock fibres or mixtures of mineral fibres with synthetic polymer yarns.

18. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said fabric is a non woven fabric formed from one or more yarn staples.

19. A belt according to claim 18, wherein said yarn staple comprises one or more groups of fibres selected from the group comprising:- meta or para aramids; polyetherimide; polyimide; polyetherketone; PEEK; gel-spun UHMW polyethylene; polybenzimidazole; glass fibres, carbon fibres, ceramic fibres; basalt fibre; other rock fibres.

20. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said fabric comprises a non woven fabric incorporating additional spaced apart linear yarns extending substantially in a common

direction and a polymeric matrix material interconnecting and at least partially encapsulating each said yarn.

21. A belt according to claim 20, wherein said linear yarns are oriented in the running direction of said belt.

22. A belt according to claim 20, wherein said linear yarns are oriented in transversely of said belt.

23. A belt according to claim 22, wherein additional reinforcing yarns are provided extending in the running direction of said belt.

24. A belt according to claim 1, wherein said belt has a relatively high open area.

25. A belt according to claim 24, wherein said belt includes a spiral-link belt.

26. A belt according to claim 25, wherein said spiral-link belt supports a woven or non woven fabric layer which is coated or impregnated with said polymer.

27. A belt according to claim 1, wherein the surface of said belt is formed with grooves extending in the running direction of the belt to remove wet slurry generated in use.

28. Apparatus for polishing silicon wafers, incorporating an endless belt to act as a polishing tool, wherein said belt is a belt according to claim 1.